More on anti-Semitism in the State Department HW 4/7/91

After reading Clark Clifford's account of the fierce and determined State Department opposition to creation of the State of Israel, particularly but by no means limited to that of the secretary, General George Marshall, I wrote of my having been caught up in a pogrom there, far from all the details but I hope enough to be informative and to make and adequate record.

A Dane with whom I've been in correspondence, Lasse Larsen, a well-educated man with a better command of English than most Americans, recently sent me the paperback reprint of Harold Flender's 1962 "Rescue in Denmark," an account of how the Danes saved 98.5 percent of Denmark's Jews from Hitler's extermination, mostly by sailing them to Sweden. I'd had some idea of this from a friend, the late Olaf Seidenfaden, from a Danish family with heavy timber involvements in Thailand. His mother was a Thai. Olaf told me what I do not find in this book, that his uncle, then chief of police in Copenhagen, had a major role in the rescue. Olaf, who told me this story about 25 years ago, probably longer, was so fiercely anti-Nazi that he left the United States, where he had a successful log exporting business, and enlisted in the Canadian army or air force and rose to colonel.

I'm sorry that on our machine it is difficult to make clear copies of small paperback book pages with their narrow margins but I enclose four pages that are a small part of the story of the determined U.S. refusal to do anything to save any of Europe's Jews from Hitler. For some I may be repeating myself, for some it will not be new, but there was an entire shipload of Europe's Jews who reached the United States in a ship named the St. Louis and were turned away. They were all burned.

There is now a considerable literature on this subject.

There is a lingering fiction that the allies did not know that Hitler was really exterminating the Jews. Kauffmann's letter refers only to the "threat" against their lives. However, it was well-known and well-suppressed much earlier that an extermination was in process. I had inklings of it in about late 1941 from contact with the New York representatives of the Polish underground.

It is now known that the Poles in particular, including Jewish Poles, did get information out and just were not believed or ignored.

found the Danish police to be almost totally uncooperative. Indeed, it was known that the Danish police played a large role in the rescue of the Jews and, later, in sabotage actions against the Germans. For this reason, the Germans attempted to arrest the entire Danish police force. On September 19, 1944, the Germans set off a false air-raid alarm, knowing that this would bring the entire police corps to its posts. The Wehrmacht then swooped down upon the Danish police and arrested several thousand of them. Over half of the Danish police managed to escape and join the underground. Those captured were sent to Neuengamme and Buchenwald. Elie Wiesel, a Hungarian prisoner at Buchenwald, recalled their arrival: "They were wonderful, these Danish policemen. Their courage, dignity and humanity were an inspiration to us, renewing our will to live. As we got to know them we saw that they were the salt of the earth." A large percentage of them were never to return to Denmark. Over six hundred of them were killed and cremated. Their ashes were returned to Denmark in common urns.

In resisting the Germans, 3,213 Danes were killed. After the war, the bodies of 199 Danish patriots murdered by the Germans were found in a common grave at Ryvangen in Copenhagen. This spot has been turned into a burial place for the victims and a memorial park for all Danes who died opposing the German tyranny. It is consecrated with these words from the Old Testament: "You stand here on holy ground."

Chapter 20 IN SWEDEN

It's comin' yet for a' that
When man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brithers be for a' that.

—ROBERT BURNS

IN 1943 THE DANISH AMBASSADOR to the United States was Henrik Kauffmann. When he first received word of

e German plan to round up the Jews in Denmark, he as in Montreal at a breakfast meeting with the city's ayor. He immediately closeted himself in his room and egan drafting a letter to Cordell Hull, the United States ecretary of state. After a while, a Canadian representive appeared to inform him that the mayor had been aiting for him for over an hour.

"He will have to wait even longer," was Mr. Kauffnann's reply. "This is more important."[1] It was not ntil after he had finished writing the letter and had ispatched it that he set out to see the mayor. This is hat Mr. Kauffmann wrote to the Secretary of State:

SIR:

According to press reports that have just reached this Legation, one of the first acts of the newly appointed military dictator in occupied Denmark was, on personal orders from Adolf Hitler, to start the deportation of the Danish Jews.

I greatly fear that very little can be done from here to come to the aid of these, my fellow citizens, in their hour of affliction. I want, however, to give you the assurance, Mr. Secretary, that any measures the American Government might deem feasible and appropriate to take in an attempt to afford protection to the Danish Jewish population, or to alleviate their fate and the threat against their lives, will have my full and unconditional support. As far as financial responsibilities may be involved, I undertake the guaranty towards your Government, or any other Government that may incur expenses in the effort to bring help to Danish Jews or other Danish nationals persecuted by the Nazis, to reimburse such expenses out of the Danish public funds under my control in this country. In making this declaration I know I am acting in line with the wish of the people of Denmark.

I should be grateful for an early opportunity to discuss with you, Sir, what it may be possible to do in order to render assistance to my nationals and to protect them against the dangers threatening their existence.

Receive, Sir, the assurance of my highest consideration.

In reply to Mr. Kauffmann's letter, the United States State Department, on the odd excuse that public knowledge of the Ambassador's offer would work to the dis-

advantage of the Jews, asked the Danish Ambassador to keep the contents of his letter secret. However, Mr. Kauffmann immediately cabled the Swedish Foreign Ministry in Stockholm to notify them that should Sweden accept the Danish Jews, he would put at their disposal the funds to underwrite all costs involved. In addition, he contacted leaders of the American Jewish community, including Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, to make known to them his offer and to assure them that he would do everything he could to aid their coreligionists in Denmark. Rabbi Wise was so moved by Mr. Kauffmann's proposal that he later described it to a friend as one of the most heart-warming acts of humanity which he, as a Jew, had ever experienced from a Christian.

When the German-controlled Danish authorities learned of the offer which their ambassador to the United States had made without their authority, they dismissed him from office, denounced him as a traitor and ordered him to return to Denmark immediately to stand trial for treason. Mr. Kauffmann chose to remain in the United States, where he requested and received from the United States government recognition as the official representative of Free Denmark. One of his first acts in this capacity was to grant the United States temporary authority over Greenland. In return, Cordell Hull saw to it that Congress passed a special bill enabling Mr. Kauffmann at his discretion and for whatever use he deemed fit to free all Danish funds in the United States, including part of the gold stock of the Danish National Bank. This amounted to over twenty million dollars.

By this time Sweden had publicly announced her willingness to accept all Danish Jews, and many of them had already made their way there. Kauffmann was now in a position to offer Sweden funds to insure adequate care for the refugees. At the same time, he wanted to avoid, if possible, economic difficulties that might develop as the result of large-scale withdrawals from the public Danish funds. For this reason, working in conjunction with two American citizens of Danish extraction, Jean Hersholt, the well-known actor, and Leo Nathan, a New York furrier, Kauffmann attempted to raise part of the money for the refugees from Amer-

ican sources. On October 17, under the imprint of the Royal Danish Legation, Kauffmann circulated a letter to a wide variety of Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and organizations, asking for assistance. In it he pointed out that arrest and deportation of the Danish Jews "would—in fact—be identical with their destruction" * and that "this matter does not call upon Jews alone, but on all right-minded peoples, especially those of Danish descent." He added: "It is my hope that all Danes and Danish-Americans will consider it a duty of honor to help the Danish refugees in Sweden. I have reason to believe that the Danish-American population share my opinion that this is a matter that concerns us all."[2]

The response was gratifying. Individuals and organizations gave generously. Fur manufacturers contributed large sums of money, and the fur workers' union donated five hundred fur vests to be used by Danish seamen who had left Denmark to sail for the Allied cause.

As it turned out, no money had to be withdrawn from the Danish government's funds. Not only were American contributions generous, but the Swedish government itself contributed the handsome amount of five million dollars.[3] In addition, although the Jewish refugees generally arrived in Sweden penniless, with only the clothes on their backs, many of them quickly found jobs and were able to support themselves. In some cases, men who were accustomed to lifting nothing heavier than a fountain pen volunteered to go to the rugged northern regions of Sweden to cut timber. Inevitably, however, these would-be woodsmen collapsed under the strain and returned to Stockholm after several days in a state of complete physical exhaustion. More appropriate positions for these Jewish lawyers, teachers and clerks were to be found in refugee relief work. There was a great need for them in this capacity, but their roles in relief work occasionally engendered ill-feelings on the part of some of the non-Jewish refugees.

Of the 17,020 Danish refugees in Sweden, 9,114 be-

* It is interesting to note how many Allied government officials were not as well informed as Mr. Kauffman. Some of these officials denied any knowledge of the tragic implications of the deportations as late as 1945.